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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 PORT AU PRINCE 001019

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [HA](#)
SUBJECT: HAITI IN POLITICAL GRIDLOCK: DAY 96

REF: A. PORT AU PRINCE 954
[1](#)B. PORT AU PRINCE 934

PORT AU PR 00001019 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: Ambassador Janet A. Sanderson for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)
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[1](#)1. (C) Summary: As Haiti enters its fourth month without a Prime Minister, the confirmation of the President's third Prime Minister-designate remains very uncertain. The Chamber of Deputies report on PM-designate Michele Pierre-Louis' constitutional qualifications is complete, and the Chamber is scheduled to vote on her candidacy July 17. Although the report recommends the Chamber vote in Pierre-Louis' favor, the Chamber's current majority bloc, the Cooperative of Progressive Parliamentarians, (CPP), remains divided over her candidacy. The CPP will not decide how their bloc will vote until after they meet with Pierre-Louis on July 17. In the Senate, several senators have already announced they will not support her. Intentionally or not, President Preval has undermined Pierre-Louis' support among political parties by giving the impression he intends the Pierre-Louis cabinet to be a government of technocrats from 'civil society' rather than a coalition of ministers chosen from the major parties. Her position has also been weakened by persistent rumors of her homosexuality. The outcomes of the Senate and Chamber of Deputies votes are still anybody's guess. End summary.

Chamber Commission Finds Candidacy Eligible

[1](#)2. (C) The Chamber of Deputies' seven-member commission studying Pierre-Louis' constitutional eligibility for the PM post submitted its report to the Chamber's executive bureau on July 15. Several sources inside the Chamber and from Pierre-Louis, team told Emboffs that the report cites no problems with Pierre-Louis' documentation, and recommends the deputies vote in her favor. The floor vote in the lower chamber was delayed until July 17 as many deputies returned to their home districts July 15 and 16 to celebrate patron saint festivals. Other deputies reported that the festivals were an excuse to buy more time and try to resolve discord in the informal majority grouping in the Chamber, the Cooperative of Progressive Parliamentarians (CPP; see ref B).

Pierre-Louis Meets with Majority Bloc

13. (C) Pierre-Louis met with a select group of CPP members on July 15. Deputies present say they pushed her to officially invite the CPP to meet with her. Accordingly, the CPP received a written invitation on July 16, and will meet with Pierre-Louis the morning of July 17. Following the meeting, the CPP plans to hold a 'pre-vote' to determine whether they will, as a bloc, support her candidacy, before assembling at Parliament for a floor vote later that day. Several CPP deputies told us July 16 that the CPP is likely to support Pierre-Louis. However, MINUSTAH's parliamentary liaison, Jean-Philippe Laberge (protect), noted July 16 that the CPP remains divided, with 25 CPP members favoring Pierre-Louis and 20 opposing. The remaining seven members are either undecided or have not taken part in the process.

14. (C) Among the other parties and blocs in the lower chamber -- Fusion, OPL, and the Union of Parliamentarians for National Development (UPDN) -- Pierre-Louis has the support of OPL's 9 members and at least half of UPDN's 19 members. However, Fusion deputies are undecided and will meet with Fusion party leadership July 17 to determine how they will vote. Fusion leadership has told us that they may instruct their deputies to abstain in reaction to their belief that President Preval intends Pierre-Louis, cabinet to be a government of technocrats that excludes political parties. Deputies both within and outside the CPP have told us that they want to know at least the general outlines of Pierre-Louis' cabinet and her general platform prior to voting to ratify her candidacy. Several deputies see the confirmation vote anticipated July 17, the cabinet and the government's political platform as 'all one package.' CPP Coordinator Lucas Sainvil (Lespswa) said publicly July 16 that

PORT AU PR 00001019 002.2 OF 003

many CPP members also insist Michele Pierre-Louis, clarify the issue of her alleged homosexuality before they can vote in her favor. Pierre-Louis told the Ambassador July 16 that she will not/not discuss specifics of her program until after the technical vote finds her qualified. She will not/not discuss personal or "morality" issues, and said the discussion should focus on Haiti rather than her personal life.

Limited Support in Senate

15. (C) While Pierre-Louis was optimistic, as of July 16, about her odds in the lower chamber, she was less sure about the Senate. If ratified by the lower chamber, she faces a battle in the Senate, where she needs 9 of 18 senators to vote in her favor. Three senators -- Edmonde Beauzile (Fusion, Center), Judnel Jean (Fusion, Northeast) and Fritz Carlos Lebon (Union, South) -- have already publicly declared their opposition. Senate President Kely Bastien (Lespswa, North), who can vote only in order to break a tie, said he recommended to Pierre-Louis' team that they ramp up the pressure on the Parliament. Senator Joseph Lambert (Lespswa, Southeast) assured the Ambassador that Pierre-Louis has the support of Lespswa. Senator Youri Latortue (Artibonite in Action, Artibonite) told Poloffs he will vote to confirm Pierre-Louis and is optimistic that a majority of the Senate will follow suit. However, he noted that the vote on her Cabinet and political platform, requiring the support of 16 of 18 senators, would be more difficult. Senator Latortue also told the acting UN SRSg he feels Preval must make an effort to form an inclusive Cabinet if he wants Pierre-Louis confirmed.

Preval Reaches Out to Political Parties, Public

16. (C) President Preval has met with political parties twice over the last week to discuss Pierre-Louis, and expressed to them a desire to adjust his method for selecting cabinet

members. According to Pierre-Louis, the President, taking into account the lack of discipline exercised by political parties over their elected officials, questioned the wisdom of forming the same kind of "coalition government" he formed in 2006 with ministerial posts divided among the major political parties. Pierre-Louis told the Ambassador that Preval did not/not rule out engaging political parties in the cabinet, and that political parties have misinterpreted the President's intentions. According to one OPL deputy, also a member of his party, leadership, Pierre-Louis is beginning to lose support among political parties due to what he termed Preval's recent decision to "exclude political parties from Pierre-Louis' cabinet." Fusion spokesperson Micha Gaillard told us Fusion parliamentarians would be instructed to abstain from the confirmation process should the President persist in this line of thought. OPL coordinator Edgar Leblanc told us July 16 that if political parties are not directly included in the Cabinet -- the preference expressed by Preval and Pierre-Louis in recent meetings -- OPL senators and deputies will still vote for her ratification. However, he noted that if ministerial nominees were not linked to particular political parties, they may have difficulty finding support in a parliament where no party holds a clear majority. (Note: Fusion and OPL deputies relayed this same concern, questioning whether deputies would vote in favor of a government that is not inclusive of their political party. End note.)

17. (U) In his most public sign of support for any of his PM candidates to date, Preval wrote a public letter of support to Pierre-Louis in which he praised her accomplishments, including her management and development experience, her work on literacy and rural development, and her association with religious organizations. The letter, dated June 30, appeared widely in press reports beginning July 7.

Should Her Private Life Stay Private?

18. (C) Parliamentarians, the media and others continue to

PORT AU PR 00001019 003.2 OF 003

raise Pierre-Louis' sexual orientation as a potential hindrance to her candidacy. Naysayers have called Pierre-Louis' alleged homosexuality 'immoral' and claim that she is not constitutionally qualified to be Prime Minister. They refer to Article 32 of the 1987 Constitution, which cites the government's responsibility for overseeing the moral -- as well as physical, intellectual, professional, social and civic -- education of the population. Several deputies and senators have hesitated in their support because of this issue; others have told us that they will be able to support her as long as there is no 'proof' of her homosexuality. (Note: A leading Haitian human rights organization issued a press release claiming that the debate is not actually about sexual orientation, but rather an issue of sexism. End note.)

Rumors Aplenty

19. (C) Pierre-Louis has denied rumors circulated July 15 and 16 that, in the face of crumbling support and a prolonged discussion of her sexual orientation, she is considering withdrawing her candidacy. Embassy has also heard unsubstantiated reports that President Preval asked his Chief of Staff, Fritz Longchamp, to prepare his documents in preparation for a run at the PM job, a rumor denied by those in Preval's circle. Caretaker Prime Minister Alexis' role in the process is unclear. Embassy has heard reports, again unconfirmed, that Alexis met with Preval and extracted conditions in exchange for his support for Pierre-Louis, including guaranteeing the job of Minister of Interior Paul Antoine Bien-Aime. According to MINUSTAH sources, Alexis maintains close control over 15 deputies in the CPP and therefore remains a potentially influential factor in the

Chamber of Deputies vote.

Comment: Down to the Wire

¶10. (C) Support for Pierre-Louis appears to ebb and flow on a daily basis in Haiti's currently unstable political landscape. Pierre-Louis and President Preval are lobbying political parties and legislators at the same time but are having difficulty meeting conflicting demands from those groups. Parliamentarians mistrust Preval and are wary of giving a close friend of the President the PM job, since they fear that with such a government, all decisions would emanate from the Presidential Palace. On the other hand, they also fear the consequences for their own popularity if they reject a third PM candidate. The CPP in particular has been unable to reach a common position, and is concerned about keeping its bloc intact. In the face of mounting international pressure to put a new government in place, patron saint festivals and the debate over the PM-designate,s ''morality'' provide additional ammunition for parliamentarians hoping to buy extra time to come to a decision.
SANDERSON